



School for Life

School for Life is a registered charity, raising funds to support the work of its sister organisation, Scoala Pentru Viata (SPV, "School for Life" in Romanian). Romanian

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Reg. Charity No. 1062953
Patron: Robert Carlyle, OBE

special needs teachers and therapists are employed to work with children who would not otherwise receive any form of education or life skills training. We have renovated a building and built a gymnasium for SPV to use to work with the children. This school, or "Centre for Recuperation" also provides supported accommodation to young adults from the local Neuropsychiatric hospital. Plans for the future expansion of the project will depend on our fundraising abilities, and the possibility of working in partnership with the Romanian Health authorities. Many thanks for your interest and support of our work.



Picture by one of the children in the Casa De Copii

Update from Siret

There are some ideas about changing the structure of employees in SPV, to allow for greater clarity of roles and to try to increase the staff numbers in the project in Siret. It has become apparent that there is a need for a night worker, as the current members of staff are covering night shifts on top of their usual daily hours. There is also room for another teacher so that more children in the Casa de Copii can receive input. This is all subject to the Treasurer's say-so...and how much of a stable income base we can secure in the UK.

New teacher? New Building?

A small Fundraising Committee was set up at the end of last year to focus on exploring all avenues of grant applications and fund raising that may be open to School for Life. If you have any information regarding possible businesses or grant giving organisations, please contact Sylvia Gurr or Will Gould (contact details on back of newsletter).

Currently the committee is considering applying for a large grant to buy another plot of land or another building. On Sylvia's last trip to Siret just before Easter, it was identified that the young women who currently live in the supported housing project have outgrown their living space, and are in need of larger housing that would allow them to develop their potential for independent life within the community. This would enable SPV to provide opportunities for independent or supported living for young people who are still living in the Casa de Copii (children's home), because there is nowhere else for them to go.

The car is still an ongoing issue, as reported in the last newsletter. It would greatly enhance the level of service provided by SPV to the community, but is also dependent on the fundraising ability of School for Life.

Regular visits to Siret

The new members of staff at Scoala Pentru Viata continue to provide an excellent service to the children and young people. We are very pleased at School for Life to be able to see a bit more of Martyn Welsby and Veronica, who are now living in England, having left the project. They continue to provide a crucial link between the fund raising, planning and budgeting efforts of School for Life in the UK, and the ongoing work with the children in the community of Siret by Scoala Pentru Viata. The regular visits out to Siret, self-funded by the Trustees, also ensure that we do not lose sight of what is actually needed by those running the project in Siret.

New Patron!

We can report that the famous actor, Robert Carlyle OBE, has agreed to be the Patron of School for Life! This is very exciting news, and we look forward to spicing up the newsletters with a few photos of the celeb!

CDs of music performed at the Gregson Music Festival are available for just £5 from Dave.Emptage@virgin.net (or see contact details). All proceeds directly to School For Life!

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New boots for the Boys!

By Marianne Lownsbrough

From a visit to Siret in October 2002 with Ruth Brown.

The boys from the Boy's Home in Siret were very excited at the idea of a walk and an afternoon out of the institution. We walked through the town towards the river, enjoying the lovely views of the Ukraine in the distance. The railway follows the river to nearby villages and then onto Suceava, the next big town. The boys had never been on a train before; within 5 minutes we had secured 12 seats on the train to go 2 stops down the line to the next village. The boys were so excited, laughing and chatting as the train took us on our exciting adventure.

The village gave us the chance to have some space and play a game of football. Luckily we had enough money for an ice cream each. Romanian cornets are pre-filled with ice cream and stored in boxes of 50 – not that exciting to us, but the boys loved them. As I looked at the group I felt embarrassed; we provide for them, and yet the boys were having difficulty walking. I had a good look at their shoes and realised how much we were neglecting a basic need. When we worked in the Hospital, we recognised the importance of well-fitting boots for young children, making up for the early years of poor footwear and resulting inability to walk. The older boys had the same needs, but had many more years of neglect; this affected their feet terribly, and therefore their ability to walk. A third of them had old, pointed, ladies' shoes; others had torn soles and ripped uppers. A few of the boys had socks, which were not really worth having. On the trip home we decided to ensure that all the boys had good fitting boots before our return to the UK, in 3 days time.

We were advised that purchasing local shoes or boots would be a waste of money. The shoes (if we could get them) would be badly made, and not give the support that was needed to correct the years of neglect. Up in the mountains there was a factory which produced good quality boots, but the problem was getting the boys there. Not only was there no transport, but trying to take

ten boys to a small factory shop in the mountains was sure to cause havoc!

Stefan, the Director of Education for Scoala Pentru Viata, measured the boys' feet and drew cut-outs. The boys' feet would not lie flat; despite being fully grown in length, their lack of nutrition meant that their ankles were small and they were short in stature.



Each boot cost around 15 to 20 U.S. dollars, so we needed over 5,000,000 lei (approx £118). This investment was well worth it. New socks were distributed and the trying-on began. An hour and a few swaps later, we had all the boys pleased as punch with

their new shoes. These were then tried out in the garden to ensure all fitted well. We had to keep an eye on them to ensure there were no blisters. The boys were shown how to clean and care for their new boots, and their names were proudly written in each.

Unfortunately the boys are unable to keep their boots in the "Casa De Copii" where they live; none of the children there have their own clothes or shoes, unless they are street wise and can obtain and keep their own things (often stealing them from other more vulnerable children). We decided to keep the boys' boots in the School building, issuing them (and winter coats, when needed) to the children at the start of the sessions. More work for the Scoala Pentru Viata teachers - but they all agreed that the effort in was well worth it.

Next it was the girls turn; their shoes were not too bad, but extra money has been sent to SPV from SFL so that they can also get well-fitting boots. As the groups of children grow in number, we need to ensure that they all have access to good footwear. My favourite memory of this trip has to be the huge smiles, as the boys showed us their new boots again and again .

Occupational Therapy at 'School for Life'

By Wendy, Occupational Therapist

In April of this year I visited 'School for Life' with Sylvia, one of the trustees. I have been working for over 10 years as an Occupational Therapist and was asked to offer my professional opinion on the project.

My brief informal assessment included being involved in sessions involving both free play and structured learning activities at the school and at the Gym, informal discussion with the physiotherapist and escorting the students to and from their dormitories at the institution where they live.

I was very impressed with the diversity of stimulation offered to these students. The facilitators of the sessions are very skilled in working with individual need within a group setting. There was a clear sense of security and safety within the environment of the project and this encouraged the openness and freedom for self-expression I witnessed among the students. My experience was made very special by the unconditional welcome given to me by the students and observing the respect and consideration that they gave to each other demonstrating the close bond between them.

The holistic approach of the project attempts to cover all areas of an individual's functioning in order to achieve optimum levels of independence and self-reliance.

With the high standards set by the school, the natural need for expansion is inevitable and the hope for the future is to be able to access some of the more disabled children in the Casa de Copii. Whatever the future, I will retain my interest in the project and in the country that has a special place in my heart.

In an effort to reduce administrative costs, we have the capability to publish this newsletter as a PDF electronic document. This is a compressed electronic version that looks exactly like the hard copy, and is in colour! If anyone would rather receive an electronic version (thereby saving us money) please let Phil and Lizzy know by email. All you require to read a PDF document is Adobe Acrobat Reader. This is available as a very short, free download from www.adobe.com. Any problems, contact us!

The Potential for Independent Living

By Marianne Lownsbrough

Throughout our time working in Siret, either "hands-on" in the early days of our involvement, or through the work of Scoala Pentru Viata/ School for Life, a clear aim of our work has always been for the children to achieve as many skills for "independent living" as possible. Stephan, the Director of Education for SPV has thought this through and is giving clarity and direction to the work with the teenagers by creating a rough scale indicating each young person's potential for independent living.

1. Is able to live independently in the community, free from institutionalised care.
2. Is working towards independent living; can befriend others in the community, but is still reliant upon Scoala Pentru Viata for support.
3. Unlikely to be able to leave institutionalised care, but has the potential to use the institution as a base from which they can participate within the community.
4. Will not be able to come and go independently but can attend group sessions improving quality of life within the institution.
5. Is not able to leave the institution at present.

It is very important that these categories do not limit any of the young people, but are there to ensure that we do as much as we can to improve their quality of life. In order to achieve this we need Romanian teachers! Our goal of being able to employ one more teacher this year will mean more young people can benefit. These young people otherwise receive little or no input from the institution in which they live, and without any stimulation, their prospects for the future are limited. Your standing orders and fund raising efforts are vital in providing this service to the children of Siret.



The Casa di Copii, with the Scoala Pentru Viata school building in the foreground.

FINANCIAL REPORT

By Keith Lownsbrough,
Treasurer



The cash balance on May 4th 2003 was £12430, with £5000 transferred to Romania to cover salaries and running costs of the SPV project until the end of August.

The monthly standing order base is £865, an increase from £816 in September. Thank you to all of you for your ongoing support - we couldn't do this without you! There is also an income of £1060 per annum in quarterly and annual payments. £775 a month is given under Gift Aid, providing School for Life with a potential tax rebate of over £2500 in the autumn. Please do complete the tax relief Gift Aid forms for every donation you give so that we can reclaim money from the government at no cost to you!

There have been a number of fundraising events to note: the Gregson Music Festival, arranged by Dave Emptage and featuring a host of talented musicians, raised £527. Thanks to all for their hard work and support. Copies of the songs performed are available from Dave (see contact details). Willerby Methodist Wives Group's Presidents Evening raised £161, and Goodrington Methodist Ladies Group has raised £955 over several events. The START team held an alternative talent show, raising £1118 and more that has been pledged. A bit of running has been going on with Lizzy Keetley raising £167 for running 10km in 47 mins, and Richard Davis completed a marathon in 3 hours 29 mins and raised £403.

The budget for 2002-2003 is £14420, or £1202 per month, which is well within our means (as per our financial policy). We have received donations from varied sources including finance companies and a branch of the Labour Party! Thank you all for your ongoing support and financial contributions which make the work of SPV possible.

There are no salaries, expenses or administration costs in UK, with the exception of bank charges to transfer money to Romania. All donations and standing orders go directly to the project, and any other costs in the UK are met by the Trustees themselves.

The next Annual General Meeting of School For Life will be held on Saturday 28th June 2003 at Katie and Rob Goodier's:

*Flat 2, 10 Bank Street
Hillhead
Glasgow G12 8JQ*

*tel: 0141 337 1262 or
mobile 07984 150721*

All are very welcome to attend, and there is usually a bit of a party afterwards too! Please contact Katie and Rob if you wish to attend.

Accommodation: Although everyone is welcome "Chez Goodier's", there is a nearby B&B called Chez Nous Guest House, 33 Hillhead Str, G12 tel. 0141 3342977

Travel: Easyjet flies to Glasgow Airport and there is a shuttlebus to the underground. Ryanair flies to Prestwick where you can get a subsidised train service to Glasgow Central, then a short walk to the underground.

Underground: Katie and Rob's nearest underground station is Kelvinbridge Station. From there turn left onto Great Western Road. Bank St is 2nd on left with Bar Oz on the corner.

By car: M8 direction city centre. Come off at Charing Cross exit and stay in right hand lane. Sharp right hand turn then fork left onto Woodlands Rd. At mini roundabout turn left onto Gibson St. 2nd set of lights turn right onto Bank St. Flat is situated at far end of Bank St on left. If no parking available ring bell and you will be directed!

School For Life

Dave Emptage - Trustee

Many years experience working with people with profound and moderate disabilities in long stay residential homes. Worked in Romania for 2 years bringing his experience and his music to the great appreciation of those in Siret.

William Gould - Trustee

A University lecturer who worked in Siret for over 2 years where he met and later married his wife Olivia who grew up in Siret. They ensure good communication and translation between SPV and SFL.

Sylvia Gurr - Trustee

Experienced in working with people with profound learning difficulties. She now works as a mental health worker with homeless adults and is completing her MA in integrative child psychotherapy. Sylvia worked in Siret for 3 years and is now considering returning.

Phil Keetley - Trustee/ Newsletter

Met Lizzy while they were living and working in Romania over a two year period. Phil is now in the British army. Lizzy is able to bring her knowledge and expertise of independent living to the team.

Marianne Lownsbrough - Trustee

A playworker of 20 years who now runs an assessment and training centre for Playwork covering the Yorkshire region. Worked in Siret from 1991 for over 2 years bringing different expertise within the team, and leading the work of the volunteers. Lives at the charity address with her husband the treasurer.

Keith Lownsbrough - Treasurer

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